

Tape 178

BOB RICH

Interviewed by: Lapoint 6th grade class, April 1987

Transcribed by: Janet Taylor, June 2001

Burke Huber (BH): Today is April 3, 1987. My informant's name is Bob Rich. He is sixty years old. We are at his house. The subject will be on guns. My name is Burke Huber. I am a student at LaPoint Elementary and this will be part of an oral history. What did the first gun you ever saw look like?

Bob Rich: The first gun I ever had any memory of was a .22 Stevens Rolling block type gun. Rolling block is – pull the hammer back, pull down on a lever which recedes down into the stock, and it opens the barrel up for inserting the cartridge. Single shot, place the cartridge in, lift the lever back up and it's ready to fire.

BH: Were guns harder to shoot back then or are they harder to shoot today?

Bob: Guns weren't any harder to shoot back then, but they weren't as accurate because of the sighting situation. All we had was iron sights back then, and now we have scopes. It makes a lot more precision shooting.

BH: Did people use guns more often back then or more often today?

Bob: I think guns are used a lot more today because there's a lot more sporting going on with guns: target practice, shooting matches, and so on. Powder and bullets were nowhere near as available and they were used most only when there was some good use for them, hunting or for protection.

BH: Explain how you work a matchlock.

Bob: Matchlock is a muzzle-loading rifle much like the percussion rifle. But instead of a percussion cap or flint to ignite the powder in the pan, a match is clamped into the hammer, which, when it falls, ignites the match. It sets off the powder in the pan which in turn ignites the powder through a flash-hole into the barrel, propelling the ball.

BH: Explain how you work a flintlock.

Bob: A flintlock is a muzzle-loading rifle the same comparison, except for using a match. It has a piece of flint clamped into the hammer which, when it falls, it strikes a striker, throwing a spark into the pan, igniting the powder in the pan, which in turn ignites the powder in the barrel, through a flash-hole, propelling the ball.

BH: Explain how you work a percussion.

Bob: A percussion rifle is still a muzzle-loader but it has a nipple that screws into a flash-hole in

the side of the barrel that lets a nipple stick out. You put your percussion cap on the nipple. The hammer ignites it and flashes through the flash-hole into the barrel, igniting the black powder in the barrel, which propels the ball.

BH: Describe the differences in a gun from forty years ago to one today.

Bob: Forty years ago, as I remember, most guns were lever-actions because they were designed to be carried on horseback in the saddle scabbard. They did not need a protruding bolt to make them a lot more bulky. But they weren't quite as accurate a gun as a bolt-action gun and when they started re-loading for guns they were not a popular gun to reload for. A bolt is much better.

BH: Did you ever have a hunting adventure?

Bob: Quite a few. One I'll tell you happened to me on Blue Mountain. We went hunting in a lower canyon. We wanted to get back on top and there was a crack through a ledge that left a trail up through there, but it was broken rock and partway up through the crack was a hole back off from the side that a buck had hidden out in while we were hunting. When I started up through there and I got up in front of that hole, I had him cornered. He attacked me. I spun around and shot the shot that I had under the hammer. It broke his front leg, which caused him to throw off-kilter and hit the ledge beside me instead of me. He rolled over and got back up and headed back down the crack, and went out the bottom. He almost ran over my partner who was coming up behind me, but we never did get the buck. He got clear away.

BH: That sounds pretty scary. Describe the changes that you think will take place twenty years from now on gun laws, how guns will look, and how they are made.

Bob: I don't think there will be much change in gun laws. There will be a lot of trying, but I don't think they will ever be able to completely take our guns away from us. They're going to have a lot of trouble on their hands trying to. As far as guns go, I think the regular gun for hunting and self-defense and stuff like that will look pretty close to what it does today.

BH: How do you think they'll be made?

Bob: I think they'll be made close to the same way they are now. They may get a little faster production on them, but I don't think there's that much call for guns that there will be much changes in them. We'll load the percussion muzzle-loader and fire it, one round. You take a powder measure from your powder horn. Measure out the powder. Dump it directly down the barrel.

BH: It's a hundred grains?

Bob: We're using approximately a hundred grains with this .50 caliber ball. We'll place a patch over the end of the barrel, we'll place the ball in the center of the patch. Taking your ball starter, we'll start it down the barrel. Then take the ram-rod and finish seating it. You want to sink the ball until it's good and snug in the bottom. Then place a percussion cap on the nipple and it's

ready to go.

BH: We're outside and we're going to shoot a percussion rifle.

Bob: This is what a .50 caliber percussion rifle will sound like: [SOUND OF GUN-SHOT]
That is a .50 caliber percussion rifle.

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